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Wilmington, Mass.







1730—1880.

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WILMINGTON.

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# HISTORICAL ADDRESSES:

DELIVERED IN THE MEETING-HOUSE OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST  
IN WILMINGTON, MASS., SEPT. 25, 1880, UPON THE ONE  
HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF  
THE INCORPORATION OF THE TOWN,

BY

REV. DANIEL P. NOYES, PASTOR.

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PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE TOWN.

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BOSTON:  
PRESS OF COCHRANE & SAMPSON,  
No. 30 BROMFIELD STREET.  
1881.

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# ADDRESS.

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:—

The Town of Wilmington extends to you all — natives, residents, and visitors — a hearty welcome on this day, the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of its organization. The Committee who have in charge these commemorative services have called upon me to say something which may have a tendency to freshen the memories of former times and help the younger generation to an acquaintance with their fathers.

I am not expected to cover, in the present review, the whole of the town's one hundred and fifty years; and I have found it necessary to stop with the close of the Revolutionary War — the end of the town's first fifty-three years. But we are favored to-day with the presence of invited guests whom the rest of us wish to hear; so that I leave to some other occasion the completion of even this restricted plan, and confine myself for the present to some

## REMINISCENCES OF THE BEGINNINGS OF THE TOWN.

In all studies into the history of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, or of the State that has grown from it, one fact ought ever to be kept in mind: that this colony originated in a purpose to found a State, a completely organized community; in which true religion could hold its ground against the three enemies, prelacy, fanaticism, and impiety. \* English Puritans had begun to fear that the fate of Bohemia and the Palatinate might be awaiting their own country, — the Papacy coming back into power, with the cruelties which were then her characteristic, and perhaps, with wide devastation and slaughter. They resolved that, in the worst event, there should be a place of refuge, a new

\* See Diary of John Winthrop.

England, which Jesuit and prelate could not reach, and where Christ's persecuted church could be secure.

Accordingly, it was at the instance of Puritan leaders, and especially under the counsels of the Rev. Mr. White, of Dorchester, that enterprises of trade and exploration were kept up along these shores; and about the year 1624, merchants of the south-west of England were carrying on fishing at Cape Ann. They had a station, as is well known, on the west side of Gloucester harbor; and in that year some fifty vessels were there employed. The business, however, did not thrive, and seemed on the point of failure, when a few of the best among the settlers were encouraged by these Puritan leaders in England to remove to "Nahumkeike," with the promise of reinforcements. So, in June, 1628, a small company arrived under John Endicott, who bore a commission entitling him to take charge of the whole settlement. At first, the people already on the ground, having Conant at their head, were inclined to question the claims of the new Governor, but the dispute was amicably settled; and, in a spirit of thankfulness for this happy result, Nahumkeike was baptized with the Christian name of Salem (Peace). But even with these fresh arrivals, the settlement numbered scarcely more, we are told, than fifty or sixty souls. It was reinforced, however, in the summer of 1629 by an emigration of four hundred and six souls, of which the ministers Skelton and Higginson were members; and before winter an exploring party had begun preparations for another settlement at Mishawum, or Charlestown.

In June, 1630, came the large emigration, under John Winthrop, 1500 strong, and permanently occupied Charlestown and Boston. They brought with them a charter conferring powers of essential self-government. In their arrival the "new" England was founded.

In 1640 an additional grant of land was made by the General Court to Charlestown, and for two years was known as Charlestown Village. By October, 1642, this land had received so many settlers that a church was organized, and it was set apart as a distinct township, under the name of *Woburn*, the twentieth in the Massachusetts Colony and twenty-ninth in the two colonies.



The towns then nearest to Woburn were Rowley and Ipswich on the north-east, Charlestown and Boston on the south-east, Cambridge on the south, and Concord on the west. Reading was then known as Lynn Village. To the north-west all was wilderness. The new town came to include all that is now Burlington, with a large part of what is now Wilmington. It is well for us to remember that its first minister was *Thomas Carter*, whose descendants are numerous with us to-day. May their shadows never grow few.

In the year 1700, the number of tax-payers in Woburn was only 187. But in 1725, it was 305. In 1708, its valuation stood fourth in the county. Judge Sewall notes in his diary, under the date of August 12, 1702, that he traveled on that day from Andover to Woburn, "through the Land of Nod," in which he owned some 300 acres. "This," says he, "is the first time that I have seen it. Got late to Fowl's," at Woburn. August 13, "Visit Mr. Fox" — the minister; "view the hop-yards." So early had this staple, afterwards of so much consequence to these towns, begun to form a characteristic of their farming.

Woburn covered a great deal of ground. Its second meeting-house, built in 1672, was probably at that time sufficiently central. But by 1730, Sergeant Abraham Jaquith, who lived in Goshen,\* — probably in the garrison-house which stood over the cellar, a few rods beyond the house now owned by Mr. Aldrich, — was fully seven miles away; and Deacon James Thompson (at Mr. Rich Carter's) was quite as far; while many other families in various parts of the town found themselves, especially in winter, at very inconvenient distances; few of them nearer, I suppose, than four miles, and most over five.

It must not be supposed, however, that this kept them from attending or made them late. Tradition has it that "the inhabitants of the remotest corner of Goshen would often travel to meeting in winter on snow-shoes; and Deacon James Thompson was wont to be there on summer mornings by eight o'clock, which must have been at least an hour before the services commenced." (Hist. Woburn, p. 243.) A saying of Deacon Ben-

\*A name then given to the region now constituting the central and western parts of Wilmington.

jamin Jaquith (son of Abraham) is preserved, which shows plainly his opinion of the value of a spirit of promptitude in matters of religion. This vigorous old Christian greatly impressed the boys of that generation with his maxim, and the words of emphasis with which he drove it home: "*Airly to meetin', airy to heaven, I vowger!*"

We have not time to lay before you the long process by which the fathers of Wilmington freed themselves from this hardship of Sunday travel, which had not yet come to be viewed as a privilege. But they were five years and eight months in doing it. Woburn was unwilling to lose so many good citizens. The plan of allowing a sum of money for the support of preaching in school-houses during the winter was tried, but proved unsatisfactory. There was endless talk through all these years, and at last some of the Reading neighbors became interested in it. So, on the 5th of September, 1729, a petition, headed by Samuel Eames, of Goshen, and John Harnden, of Reading, was presented to the General Court, praying that the north part of Woburn and the west part of Reading be made a distinct precinct. This failed, but was speedily followed by another for a new *town*, which met with more favor. Woburn and Reading were summoned to show cause why it should not be granted; a committee of both houses spent some days in carefully looking over the ground, noting the distances and estimating the ability of these regions for the support of preaching, and finally reported it "highly reasonable that the petition be granted." This report settled the long controversy. A bill incorporating the new town under the name of *Wilmington* was passed to be engrossed, Sept. 25, 1730. Wherefore we are here this 25th of September, 1880.

The act is passed, engrossed, signed. There is a new town, *Wilmington*. What sort of a region does it occupy? How numerous are its people, and what their occupations and general condition? It was a district some seven miles long, lying north-east and south-west, about four miles wide near the middle, narrowing toward each extremity, but especially toward the north, having for a sort of core, and its peculiar characteristic, the extensive, irregular, wet meadow-land of two large,



sluggish brooks, which unite in the eastern part of the town to form the Ipswich River. On either side of these branching meadows lie sandy uplands of diversified surface, covered with pines of both kinds, and occasionally with a growth of oak. Some of the lowland is densely clothed with larch and maple and cedar. The slopes of the uplands are often very gentle, and the lower parts a soft loam. The south-eastern border of the town is diversified; the south-western and western rise into wooded heights; and the northern part is almost entirely occupied with hills. The general character of the center and the north-west is either a level or gently rolling pine-land, or else low meadow-land. Much of the soil is rather sandy, much is wet; but a good deal of it responds handsomely to a faithful cultivation, and many patches are fertile. It is, in the main, a wholesome and pleasant region to live in, with no high hills to hinder travel; with extensive woods, in which deer are found; a great abundance of partridges and rabbits; quite as many foxes as most of the inhabitants want; legions of musk-rats and minks; a few otter, with, possibly, a very few beaver, an occasional wild-cat, and once in a while a bear.

The following story, of somewhat later date, has come down to us:—

In August, 1760, two young men—Ephraim Buck, twenty-nine years old, and Nathan, who was only sixteen—had been spending the forenoon in mowing in the meadow a short distance above where the bridge now stands, this side of “the city.” They were sons of Ephraim, the grandfather of Mr. Benjamin Buck, who is with us to-day. At twelve o’clock they went home to dinner. When they came back they saw that their windrows had been disturbed. They thought this was queer; for there were no cattle about. But looking narrowly, they were startled to find the tracks and the leavings of a bear! He must be still near. Instantly they ran home to get their dogs and guns and rouse the neighbors. They were soon ready and off for the woods and the bushes. Old Mr. Ephraim himself was out with his ancient queen’s arm loaded with two bullets. A neighbor went with him. The old man seated himself at the roots of the tree since known as the “Bear Oak,” and the neighbor stationed himself farther this way (north-west), not very far from

Mr. Pierce's place. Meanwhile the boys and the dogs were ranging the thickets, and not in vain; for it was not very long before the old man saw something stirring, twenty-five rods away, among the bushes. He cocks his gun and sees that the priming is right, and eagerly watches. Directly the bear shows himself, evidently somewhat disturbed at the noises in his rear. He comes forward towards the brook, and puts his fore-paws up on a hassock, which was so high that it exposed him, a very fair mark. He had doubtless just spied enemies on that side also, when the boys in the bushes behind heard their father's gun, and the old man, standing up, saw that the bear had disappeared. Who got to him first I do not know, but whoever did found him stone dead. The distance must have been some twenty rods; but one bullet had gone to his heart and one was lodged in the "heart-skirts." He weighed, when dressed, sixty pounds a quarter, and his live weight must have been over two hundred and fifty pounds. Tradition has it very clearly that that gun was loaded with *two balls*. But every true-born son of Wilmington will forever believe, and against all odds will testify, any records to the contrary notwithstanding, that that bear was killed by one Buck's shot, and his name was Ephraim.

Only one other instance of the appearance of a bear has been mentioned to me. Mr. William Boutwell tells me that his grandfather, when crossing the brook near his house, was surprised to see one getting over the wall on the east of the road, with her cub, and then crossing the road and disappearing in the bushes on the west. In 1730, this animal must have been more frequently seen. A small hill, about a quarter of a mile this side of Mr. Boutwell's, near Mr. Dowd's, used to be known as Bear's Hill.

The early records contain many accounts of the laying out and also of the discontinuance of roads. Those first traveled went round the swamps when possible, and were very crooked. The changes, which have been many and often great, were mostly straightening and shortening by means of causeways. Many of them must have furnished fragrant and delightful summer drives, all embosomed as they were in pine-woods; but were dark when the nights were cloudy, somewhat late in



getting rid of their snow in the spring, and sandy and soft afterwards. On the whole, they must be regarded as pleasanter for young people than now, longer and harder for horses.

Wilmington took forty-three tax-payers from Woburn ; how many from Reading I have not been able to learn. If twenty, then the population probably amounted to three or four hundred.

We still have houses in the town which give a good idea of many that were standing then.

In the extreme north, the place now occupied by Mr. E. C. Stockwell, close upon the Andover line, was once the property of a family named *Jones*. It seems to be of considerable age.

The eastern part, at least, of the house now occupied by Mrs. James Pearson, dates back to the beginning of the town. The frame was covered with inch-and-a-half plank, and filled in with brick. The form of the house as a whole, however, has been greatly altered. Probably the original dwelling was very much smaller than the present. Many of the earlier houses were not plastered within, for lack of lime, and the planks and bricks were for protection against both the weather and the Indians.

Far up in this same Land of Nod, you all remember that other very hospitable-looking old place, also a large square house, with its open green and great elms. That belonged originally to Stanleys — a name that has disappeared.

The Upton place, near by, marks the spot where another name, Rich, surviving here only as a Christian name, once had its home.

A smaller house, the original form of which can be distinguished in spite of the change from a gambrel to a sloping roof, now occupied by Mr. Holt, was raised July 4, 1776, and, though forty-six years younger than the town, is an example of houses of the olden time. Similar to this is the one now occupied by Deacon Levi Manning, which also is old.

The farm now owned by Mr. Silas Brown embraces part of the land belonging, a hundred and fifty years ago, to *Samuel Dummer, Esq.* Mr. Dummer's house stood at the foot of the hill, in the rear, north of the barn, and near the road to North Reading, which then curved round the hill on its western and

northern sides so as to cross the brook where the present road crosses it, near the saw-mill. The old apple-trees, still to be seen, are said to have stood just behind or at the end of the house, which probably fronted the south.

Mr. Brown's house was built, eighty-five years ago, by Col. Joshua Harnden.

A Harnden lived on the top of the hill, west of Mr. Samuel Gowing's. Still earlier, in 1796, John Harnden occupied a house "about sixty rods from this spot," with his wife and eight children. Some Indians had been attacking Dunstable. Five of them came down to this house one night, when Mr. Harnden was away, entered through the roof, and killed Mrs. Harnden and three of the children. The others hid behind a large rock, but were discovered and carried off, though afterwards rescued by a party of pursuers.

This murderous act is said to have been prompted by a desire of revenge for the death of a drunken squaw accidentally run over by a team, near a small pond on the road to Woburn, since known as Squaw's Pond. The cellar and well of John Harnden's house, with the big rock, known as Indian rock, are still to be seen. They are about sixty rods in the rear of the houses of Mr. Morris and Rev. Mr. Buffum.

The Blanchard farm-house, with its twelve elms and thicket of young pines, marks the home of *Cadwallader Ford*, one of the most prominent and prosperous of the citizens, at the time of the town's incorporation. Mr. Ford was born in Ireland, fled to this country when a mere boy, and after many vicissitudes, achieved an honorable success. The house was built by him, and is now occupied by his great grandchildren. It is the handsomest remaining specimen of the homes of that generation, and ought certainly to survive for another hundred and fifty years, when it will be too precious to be allowed to perish.

Go in summer to the Otis Carter crossing, on the way to Sandy Pond, look north-east, and you will see, I venture to say, the prettiest arch, made by a single tree over a railroad, that can be found in Middlesex County. A graceful elm stands stretching its arms above it, as though in benediction. That tree commemorates another family, whose name is heard no



more in the places that once knew them, and who built and inhabited the ancient house across the road. One day, long ago, a certain Mr. *Scales*, — it was either James or Nathan, — had started for Salem. Possibly his horse was old; more likely, whatever his age, he was stiffened with hard work; it is certain, at any rate, that he did not go to his master's satisfaction. So Mr. *Scales* descended from his wagon to get a stick. He soon found one, and felt in his pocket for a knife; it was not there; whereupon, a vigorous pull brings up a shoot; one strip from his hard fingers takes off the leaves, and the exhortation for his horse is ready. When he got back again the stick was still in the wagon; and his young boy, interested to examine it, exclaimed: "Why, father, this is a little tree; I am going to put it in the ground, and see what it will become." So he planted the elm that overarches the road.

The house dates back to at least 1741; for in that year it is named in the town records, in the description of the laying out of the road which passes between it and the barn. A little additional interest attaches to it from the fact that a pane of glass over the front door in the north-west end, and which is now in the collection of the Massachusetts Historical Society, bears this inscription: "*Aug. 2d, 1769. The infamous Governor left our town,*" — referring, it is supposed, to Gov. Bernard, and his attempt to arrest persons for constructive treason.

The house is worth looking over, as it is a specimen of a very ordinary style of building. It is, you remember, of the usual shape, the rear roof sloping to within a few feet of the ground, with one great chimney, its bricks laid in clay. The front, however, is now coarsely stuccoed. The upper story certainly gave me a sensation of coolness, as I looked at the thin board walls, now full of cracks, in spite of clapboards, the only protection against cold storms, and imagined what sort of bed chambers they would be on a winter's night, with the wind strong from the north-west. And one of the two has no fireplace, and the other only an unfinished one, which a glance shows, were never once used. The house speaks plainly of hard times and rough living. But these chamber walls may have been once filled in with brick. Unless this was so, I should be very slow to believe that these chambers were used in winter

for sleeping; more likely, they were store-rooms for corn, beans, pumpkins and hops. A round trap-door, opening into the attic, speaks plainly still of the bags of hops that used to go up and down there. Do you ask where the sleeping was done? I venture to answer: in the little rooms at each side of the kitchen; and perhaps, sometimes, in the kitchen itself. For I hear a tradition respecting an ancient member of a very well-known family of this town, that when the son brought his young wife home, there was but one room that could furnish them accommodations for the night; and that, the one in which the boiling and the baking and the roasting and the eating and the washing and the ironing were done, in the day-time. So in the kitchen this couple lived, for a number of years; until the death of the old folks opened another room to their use. And, in my opinion, the kitchen was, during the winter, by far the most comfortable sleeping room, with its great, warm chimney, and its huge bed of covered coals, giving out heat all night long. The young folks were, of course, the first to be up in the morning. Foremost of all, the young husband would uncover the coals, put on a back-log, lay a strong fore-stick, and then pile high the pine wood and the oak, making a roaring fire, by which his wife might dress, while he went out to feed the cattle; and then the old folks, when they came forth from the snug bedroom, near by, would find all things put in order, the hearth swept, the fire blazing, the kettle steaming, and the table set, with grateful promise of breakfast. — Could you not have enjoyed it?

It would not be safe,—let me say, in passing,—for any to imagine, because some of these ancient houses were roughly built, and parts left unfinished, and the large families necessarily crowded, that those households lived in discomfort. They had a plenty of the most wholesome food,—beans and brown bread, and pumpkins, and cabbages, and turnips, with cider apple-sauce, pies, doughnuts and gingerbread: what more can man want! They worked, and they eat, heartily; they breathed pure air; those great chimneys did the work of ventilation well; and their pulse beat so strong, that when they were sick, it was not an illness of the low, slow, doubtful kind,—nobody able to tell what was the matter; it was a



vigorous sickness, that spoke plainly. There were men among them who would go without overcoat, and some without mittens, all winter long. As they sat in front of those noble fireplaces, the genial warmth crept and flashed all through them, and cheered them with its indescribable deliciousness. Why, the young people of to-day do not know an open fire—how different its darting heat from that which comes through a hole in the floor, or from a close stove, and soaks into you, like a fog,—how much more stimulating the fire is, more positively refreshing after cold and wet, more provocative of sleep, when one is tired, and of talk and laughter, when one is still feeling fresh after the day's toil. There was, very likely, no coffee or tea, but there was an abundance of milk for all kinds of porridge, there was cider and home-brewed beer, and there was occasionally a little *toddy*; which had the virtue, now rare, of being what it was called.—But to return to the houses.

The house now in the hands of Samuel Gowing was built by Joseph Harnden, less than a hundred years ago. That belonging to the brothers Gowing, a hundred and fifty years ago, was in the same name. That occupied by N. Bradley Eames was the home of Hathornes; and Mr. Pickering, of an Evans. The house of Mr. Lemuel C. Eames was standing a hundred and fifty years ago; and perhaps, also, that of Mr. Benjamin Buck, or a part of it; both in the hands of the same families, though both have undergone alterations. Deacon Morrill tells me that he used to hear about an old Capt. Slocum, who once lived in the little house upon the main road, north-west of the Boston & Maine Railroad crossing, at the station, against whom some Indians had a grudge, which they vented in a less bloody manner than usual. In the absence of the family they broke into the house, took out the feather beds, ripped them up, and scattered their contents to the winds. One would think they had lived near a college. The gambrel roofed house opposite the tannery, seventy years ago belonged to Squire Samuel Eames, and is supposed to have been in the same name in 1730. An ancient Blanchard house is still standing at the top of the hill, on the corner of the North Reading road; but this house, if on the ground in 1730, must have belonged to Daniel Killam. It

seems probable that there was then no house on this site, and that Mr. Killam's stood over the little cellar, on the north of the North Reading road, near the foot of the hill.

On the main street there was then no house between the spot first mentioned and the present line of the Lowell Railroad, except the one now occupied by Mr. William Eames. Seventy years ago the only other houses were those now belonging to Mrs. Timothy Carter, and to Deacon Cadwallader Morrill. On the spot where Mr. Joseph Ames lives stood a dwelling of the Jaques family; and farther down on the same side another, which still remains, was occupied by Carters. The father of Mr. Rich Carter was born there, though he afterward lived where Mr. William H. Carter, 2d., now lives, and it was in that house that Mr. Rich Carter was born.

Further along on the road toward Woburn, on the right, this side of the low ground, is a place that belonged to the Flaggs. The farm house now occupied by Mrs. Benjamin Perry and her son, belonged to John Gowing, a younger brother of the present Mr. Joseph Gowing's grandfather. But the road now connecting that corner with Reading and Lowell was not then in existence. Mr. Lorenzo Butters lives where his fathers did. A little further on was another Butters place, just beyond that, a third, the "garrison house" for that part of the town, now owned by Mrs. Avery and Mrs. Spalding. The second story of this house originally projected a foot or more over the first; and Deacon Morrill remembers how the chains, the hoes, the shovels and harnesses used to look, hanging underneath; and how a traveler once remarked to his companion as he passed, "Well, we have got to the sign of the horse collar." Part of a fourth house is now the dwelling of George Taylor; a fifth site is found at Mr. Johnson's place; a sixth at the Addison place; and the whole was known as *Butters' Row*. The Bell farm, then as now, lay below; the house standing over the cellar opposite the barn on the right.

In the west district, Mr. Edward Carter and Mrs. Roxanna Carter occupy the old Walker place; Widow Jonathan Jaquith, the house built by Peter Corneille; in the "garrison house" of that part of the town, (standing a few years ago opposite the road turning southward beyond Mr. Aldrich's),



Abraham Jaquith\* lived,—1730, 57 years old; near by, to the south-east, is the Joshua Jaquith house, not quite so ancient; this side, one owned by Mr. Aldrich, and built by Captain James Jaquith, grandson of Abraham; and half a mile this side is the cellar of still another house, in the same name. Up the Billerica road, near the old canal locks, once stood a dwelling built by Jonathan Beard, sold by him to Col. Samuel Hopkins, and by him to Mr. Timothy Carter. This, together with the neighboring houses of William Nichols and Joseph Burnap, was burned by fires kindled by sparks from a locomotive.

If we think over the ancient houses which still remain, and try, in imagination, to restore their former owners to the places which once knew them, we shall find them to have been comfortable and respectable farmers. That they respected themselves and their neighbors, is proved by the reason which moved them to organize a new town,—that the people might be able to unite in the public worship of God. To them, the obligation of such worship was as plain as that of earning their living. With very few exceptions, all felt themselves to be sinful children of Adam; all to be judged at God's bar; all in need of God's forgiveness; all looked toward one Saviour; all were expecting the endless life; and all were agreed that instruction in the way of so living here as to make sure of a blessed immortality, is a matter of importance. This it was, above all things else, which led to the organization of the town. And these sentiments lay at the basis of the self-respect and of the mutual respect, that characterized the people. It is a more dignified reason for the movement than any other; more honorable to them, than though it had originated in dissatisfaction with the way the rest of the town had voted money; much more to their credit, than if the leading motive had been, the rule of some party, or some clique of Goshen farmers or esquires. I think that, to whatever Christian denomination any of their descendants now belong, they all are thankful that the town of Wilmington had its origin in sentiments running so

\* Born Feb., 1673, died Dec. 18, 1753, aged 80 years, 11 months. Sarah, his wife, died Feb. 13, 1771, in her 90th year. He must have spoken with some of the first settlers of Woburn—and of Wilimington. Men now living have spoken with his son.

deep and rising so high. The majority of those people may have been poor; they sat down, perhaps, to what Commonwealth Avenue would consider coarse fare,—which, by the way, is often the best; but their thoughts went beyond tables and pocket-books. They meant that the women and children should not be shut out all winter from the house which was the house of God and the soul. It is no small privilege to be able to look back to such an ancestry — better far than border ruffians and robber barons.

Well, then, here we have a number of serious-minded, sensible farmers, distributed over a wide surface, none of them with many near neighbors, and they are going to set themselves up into a separate town. *How will they begin?* Let us look and see. One of their number, *Samuel Dummer*, Esq. (who was, probably, a native of Newbury, and a near relative, possibly brother, of Leut. Governor William Dummer, founder, a little later, of Dummer Academy), this Mr. Dummer has been authorized by the General Court to call the first town-meeting. Upon his summons the legal voters assembled “in the school-house,” on the 20th of October, 1730. The site of the school-house I have endeavored to discover, but have got no further than this, that it was probably in the western or south-western part of the town. The oldest site that I hear of, is the north-west corner which the road that passes Mr. Lorenzo Butters’ house makes with the road parallel with the Lowell Railroad.

Unfortunately, the first leaf of the town records is missing. The first words on the second leaf are, “the Word of God among us; and it passed in the affirmative.” They were going to have the “Word of God” here, for all to share, at all seasons of the year.

The next vote was, that this Word should be dispensed in the school-house until the town be provided with a better place. The third vote set apart sixty pounds towards the support of the gospel [At this date, twenty-one shillings of the *current money* were reckoned equal to one ounce of silver; hence this sum, if paid in currency, would be equal to \$200, a little more than \$57 in New England silver.] Fourthly, they voted that the two ends of the town agree upon the site of a meeting-house, at the end of one week.



Fifth, two deacons, John Harnden, a member of the Reading church, and James Thompson, of the Woburn church, were made a committee for providing preaching until March; and Deacon Harnden was requested to act as the town's "cash-keeper;" the town having neglected at the proper time to provide itself with a treasurer, supplies its lack in this way.

Then they proceeded to take measures for getting back the money they had paid toward the settlement fund of Rev. Mr. Jackson, colleague of Rev. Mr. Fox, at Woburn; the apportioning of which settlement had apparently been hastened by the Woburn authorities, so as to levy upon Goshen before its separation had been consummated.

[For the benefit of the younger part of the audience, it may be well to explain here that in those days ministers were settled for life, and received, besides their yearly salary, a certain sum of money, or other provision, toward a house and its furnishing. This provision was styled "the settlement."]

After that, we find the town voting that the pay for work on the highway shall be three shillings a day for a man with a yoke of oxen and cart,—nominally half a dollar, in actual value not over one-third as much.

Next, we find them returning to the subject of the meeting-house; the vote postponing the choice of a site for a week was reconsidered, and it was agreed to try to settle the matter at once. The town-meeting transferred itself to the neighborhood of the point which had been determined to be the center of the township, and, greatly to their own surprise, the citizens found themselves able to agree upon a site, to wit: on the rising ground about seventy rods southwest of Daniel Killam's house. It is now seventy-four rods from the upper end of the horse-sheds that front on the street to the corner of the North Reading road, at or near which this dwelling stood.\*—"For which Christian and brotherly agreement," say the town records, "in a matter of such great moment, and which is generally of such lamentable consequence, to God be all the praise."

There can be no doubt that the heads of families went to

\* That house must have been either the one now known as "the Col. Blanchard house," or a predecessor on the same corner, or else the small house that was standing a few years ago over the old cellar, still open, at the bottom of the hill, on the east of the road, some six rods further off.

their homes bearing pleasant news to the wives, the aunts and the grandfathers who had not been present at the town-meeting. It was better than could have been expected. Curiosity was not soon satisfied. We may be sure that before people went to bed that night many questions had to be answered as to how it all happened; what various persons said, and especially certain individuals, famous for differing from their neighbors. People could hardly persuade themselves that the matter was really settled. And it was not. We find indeed no proof of after difference in the records of the town, but under the date of June 16, 1731, we read in the records of the General Court, that "a petition from inhabitants of Wilmington, headed by James Symonds and James Proctor, is presented, declaring that the people of that town are 'much divided as to the site of their meeting-house;'" and asking a committee of both Houses to settle the matter. So Daniel Epes, James Wilder and others are made that committee, and on Dec. 30, 1731, present their report, to wit: "The most proper place is at a heap of stones, on Mr. Benjamin Johnson's land, placed by the committee four poles distant from the center of the precinct, south-easterly." According to one supposition respecting the spot here called "the center," this heap of stones was a little east or north-east of the house now occupied by Mr. James Skilton; according to another supposition, a few rods still further east. The General Court had thus ordered the house to be put some fifty or sixty rods west of the site first chosen. So much the Goshen part of the town had won by their fourteen months' worriment. But even the General Court could not still the busy waters of Wilmington talk. Again, on Thursday, June 8, 1732, not six months later, and just one year, lacking a week, from the Symonds' petition, a second petition, headed by Simon Thompson, prays that the meeting-house may be placed just sixty poles (instead of four poles) easterly of the center; and the court granted that it stand fifty-six poles easterly; and there, at last, it stuck. And with good reason, I think we all agree; for four rods further easterly would have set its eastern end hard upon the slope near the present receiving tomb. The names of *none* of the three men who are on record as at the head of these petitions appear on the tax-lists of that day.



We note in this bit of history that there were people here a hundred and fifty years ago who had leisure to be dissatisfied. Here they come to view, uneasy fellows, their number and quality wholly forgotten, but only this remembered, that when the town had come to an unexpectedly happy agreement, much to its comfort and to its credit, they would not be content, but must needs stir dissatisfactions; and the result is, that after one year and eight months the meeting-house stands upon the site first voted. They had their labor for their pains.

This little narrative brings to mind a scrap of more modern Wilmington history, that also affords a specimen of the needlessness of many town disputes, and of the shrewdness that sometimes settles them, spreading likewise a quiet laughter over the town, that still breaks out again among the storytellers of successive generations. I hear it said that when the second meeting-house was to be built, there was quite an energetic movement to transfer the site some fifty or sixty rods, to the neighborhood of the present flag-staff, the place, in fact, which had been designated by the General Court eighty years before. On this little matter, there being a good deal of combativeness in town lying idle, and a large power of talk, the whole town was able to come into a highly agitated condition, — the people angry as people can only be over nothing at all. In this state of affairs a town-meeting assembles. It is largely attended. All are on tiptoe to see what is going to happen, and the malcontents are determined that at all events the house shall not be rebuilt on the old lot; when very deliberately the leader of the conservatives rises, and says that for his part he is tired of controversy, and does not mean to continue it. *He* shall go in for moving the meeting-house to a new place. And he had made up his mind for putting it further south, as far down as anybody wanted it, *and on the east side of the road*. These closing words awakened universal astonishment among the opposite party and intense opposition. “We don’t want it on the east side!” they cry. “We won’t have it on the east side! We’d a great deal rather it should stay where it is!” “Very well; suit yourselves. I have nothing to say about it.” “Mr. Moderator!” shouts somebody at exactly the right moment, “I move that we put it on the old spot.” And so it was

carried. A good many farmers, you can safely believe, laughed to themselves as they twitched the reins that day on the way home from town-meeting.

I have now carried you as far into the beginning of our town as the time permits. On a future occasion I propose to invite as many of you as may be within easy reach, to study the process of getting a meeting-house placed on this hill, and of securing a minister for its pulpit. Then, jumping a few years, we will watch the slow rising and the progress of that thunder-storm, the Revolutionary War, as seen from Wilmington, and will take note of the way in which that struggle brought itself home to these retired households amid these woods and fields.

It would be out of character for descendants of the fathers whose acts we have been studying to dismiss this subject without some reflection upon traits and differences of those former times.

Cannot you imagine yourself sitting, on a Sunday morning, on the inner front seat of the north-east gallery of the meeting-house, looking down into the pulpit and watching the people as they come in? And cannot you also think of yourself as having completed this inspection, at the end of the service, by hastening round to the front of the house, and again watching them as they came out, as they mounted their horses or took seats in their wagons? In such a picture of imagination what differences have struck you?

In the first place, you must have noted the large number of sturdy frames and ruddy faces among both men and women. You can see to-day how these have repeated themselves in great and in great-great-grandsons and daughters. They were more numerous then, because the women breathed better air in their houses, and most of the men lived athletic lives out under summer suns, and in winter amid fragrant pines. Some faces, indeed, kindled with a warmer color than it has been my lot even once to see here, which might be styled West Indian or New England, according to its source. You would have discovered more rheumatic, wrinkled, decrepit people than now. For there were more who grew old early, owing to the harder work, to the general absence of underwear, even in the coldest weather, and to various exposures, within doors and without.



Old men would put forth shaking hands in greeting; aged women would be helped up the doorsteps, and chins would come nearer to noses than young people of our day have ever seen; for dentistry had not been invented, and the apology for it, found possibly in cities, was costly and very clumsy, as even fifty years later General Washington found, to his sore discomfort.

In the meeting-house you would have been struck with the marked gravity of the adults, with a dignity and sometimes a set solemnity of aspect. There is less now of personal authority and consequence, less of a certain kind of reverence, and of the beauty of mien and expression which these sentiments give; but on the other hand there is less of an air of formality, of awkward diffidence, and of rudeness and levity among the young.

You would certainly have been struck with the general plainness of attire; almost the whole congregation being clothed in garments of homespun, made up in the family, often clumsily, or with the imperfect skill of some dressmaker or tailoress from among the neighbors; the women having comparatively few touches of bright color, and a few of the gentlemen with quite as many such touches as any of the ladies. But it was clearly a self-respecting and sturdy folk that drove their own horses to meeting on those Sundays.

If you reflected then upon what you saw, and thought it all out, how it had come to pass that these people were assembling in that house, built of lumber from their own wood-lands, put together by their own hands, you saw that the idea was in them which took John Winthrop and his fifteen hundred across the water; that this people were bent on worshiping God according to the teachings of the Bible, and distinctly not according to rules laid down for them by some other authority near or far. You would see on further thought that this, before you, is a bit of that *new* England which sagacious men had provided on these shores for a refuge and a defense. *Freedom to serve God and one another according to the Scriptures!* this was in their blood and their bones. In no other freedom did they see any use. For this they were ready to die. This they bequeathed; and it is the greatest secular inheritance that can be found in all the earth. These people knew well that this is lost if either their political or their spiritual liberties are lost.

Forty years before they had rebelled against Andros. Forty-five years later they will rebel against George III. To-day the same spirit actuates their children. It is *one people* through all these two hundred and fifty years. This church stands, one and the same church, its name, as of old, simply "The Church of Christ in Wilmington," the one church of the town, still its truest center. Around us here are the graves of the fathers; many of their children are by our side; many others are scattered abroad.

I am sure that we all are here to-day in oneness of spirit,—grateful for the fathers' pious memory, thankful for the good providence which permits us all to nourish our hearts with these thoughts of the former days, of the good men and women whose footprints abide a blessing within the soil that bears their sons; and *resolved*, that the heritage of lofty purpose which we have received shall be handed down to those who come after us,—the love of that just and sacred liberty which the fathers loved, the liberty to serve God and one another in accordance with the teachings of the Bible, together with the love of that other, secular liberty, likewise sacred,—that government of the people, that is "for the people and by the people," in town, county, state and nation, the one substantial public outward bulwark of whatsoever is thoroughly good. I am sure that to this, you all say, Amen! Keep your Amen ever living in both your hearts and acts.

And now, in testimony to this oneness, let us join in singing the hymn:—

(SABBATH HYMN BOOK, 1111.)

God bless our native land!  
 Firm may she ever stand,  
     Through storm and night;  
 When the wild tempests rave,  
 Ruler of winds and wave,  
 Do thou our country save  
     By thy great might!

For her our prayer shall rise  
 To God above the skies;  
     On him we wait.  
 Thou who art ever nigh,  
 Guarding with watchful eye,  
 To thee aloud we cry,  
     God save the State!

SECOND ADDRESS.





## SECOND ADDRESS.

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FELLOW-TOWNSMEN AND FRIENDS:—

In the address which it was my privilege to deliver on the town's one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, I was able to furnish some account of the characteristics of the early times and of the circumstances and doings of the first town-meeting. To-night I begin where I then left off.

### THE MEETING HOUSE.

The second town-meeting was held Dec. 3, 1730, also at the school-house; John Harnden, Sen., Moderator. At this meeting it was voted to build a meeting-house  $46 \times 30 \times 20$ , "the body of the house to be all of oak, and the plank to be full inch and a half thick, and the two end principals to be of oak, and all to be of oak but the middle principals."

Mr. Samuel Eames, Mr. Daniel Pierce, Daniel Eames, Samuel Walker, and Benjamin Harnden were appointed a building committee. But the people of the town were to have the privilege of furnishing materials, at the following prices:—

	£	s.	
The oak plank, $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. thick, @ . . . .	3	5	per 1000
Good merchantable pine boards, @ . . . .	2	5	" "
Shingles, @ . . . . .	1	5	" "
White-pine clap-boards, @ . . . . .	3	0	" "
Pitch-pine, " @ . . . . .	2	10	" "

Silver was now 21s. per ounce.

The third town-meeting was held Feb. 2, 1730–31; Mr. Daniel Pierce, Moderator. At this meeting, further details respecting the new building were provided for.

The fourth meeting was the regular annual meeting for 1731, held March 2; Mr. Samuel Dummer, Moderator. The following are some of the officers chosen:—

*Selectmen.* — Deacon John Harnden, Deacon James Thompson, Mr. Samuel Eames, Lieut. Benjamin Harnden, Mr. William Butters.

*Town Clerk.* — James Thompson.

It is worthy of note that Joshua Thompson was elected *Clerk of the Market*, an officer unknown to recent times, but sworn, as I understand it, to aid in regulating the prices of labor and commodities according to any laws made upon those matters.

It was also voted, "That the hogs shall go at liberty this year," as was regularly done, indeed, for very many years afterward, and every year two "hog-reeves," answering for hogs to the shire-reeves, or the sheriffs, for men. A hog-reeve is a hog-sheriff or constable.

No one who visited New York thirty years ago but must remember how the swine used to follow the odorous gutters of that city and of Brooklyn. But there were no fields of corn and no kitchen-gardens there for these *gourmands* to devour; and one who ponders the old records of Wilmington is led to wonder whether the swine-police could have been so much more omnipresent than city police were ever known to be, to have guarded effectually the root and corn crops of all the town.

Only two other officers were elected at that March meeting, — Stephen Wasson and Samuel Walker, "*tithing-men*." And here, for the benefit of the younger portion of my hearers, let me interrupt again the regular order of this discourse to tell something about this office, which was once very important, but has died out. The name carries us far back into Anglo-Saxon times, when every ten families constituted a *tithing*, all those families being responsible for the acts of every member. To make this plan effective, the duty of looking after all these persons was laid upon one man, called a *teodling-mann*, whence comes our *tithing-man*. Originally, this officer was obliged to have an eye open for all sorts of crimes; the ten households must pay all fines imposed by reason of a wrong of any of their members who could not be caught and punished in person. They constituted, you see, a kind of mutual insurance society against crime. But a hundred and fifty years ago the tithing-man was simply expected to put a stop to any Sabbath-breaking



and to superintend the behavior of children in the meeting-house. As families came to sit together in pews, this duty fell to parents, and the ancient office is now everywhere laid aside. But persons are listening to me who in their boyhood stood in awe of the long rods of these stern guardians of propriety. Deacon Morrill tells how he has seen a tithing man go to a boy who had been misbehaving, shake him, and set him down roughly all by himself.

But we must return to the building of the meeting-house. The house was placed where the horse-sheds opening on the road now stand, its front line a rod or rod and a half only from the present carriage-track. Its length (46 feet) was parallel with the road; its breadth (36 feet) carried it back as far as the present front of the sheds, or perhaps to their rear line. It had a door on each end, with a front door towards the road, opening into the main aisle (or alley, as the town-records call it), which ran straight to the deacon's pew, with its communion-table, and the pulpit. It had two rows of windows, like an ordinary dwelling, running round three sides; but in the rear only the round-topped pulpit-window and one to right and left. The pulpit was high, and was reached, probably, by two flights of stairs, the deacon's seat between them, on a level with a broad stair, or landing, some two or three feet above the floor.

On Jan. 6th, 1731, the town voted that the seats be arranged in two bodies, divided by the middle alley, and that Mr. Samuel Dummer have a suitable lot for a pew east of the pulpit, provision having already been made for a minister's pew.

April 21, 1732, it was voted that the body of seats for the men — *i. e.*, on the left or west side of the middle aisle — “be one foot and a half larger than the body of women's seats;” that “the middle alley be three feet wide;” that “banister seats be upon each end of the house;” “an alley from each door to the stairs” leading to the gallery;” that “the north-east corner be filled with seats,” — that is, the space from Mr. Dummer's pew to the north wall; “and that there be a table upon the men's side.” But it stands on the record of this meeting that “Daniel Going entered his dissent from the above written vote about the form and model of the seats in the meeting-house,” for this reason (and I think we shall agree

that he had a good one), “because he liked it not, and thought it not best.”

Permission to build horse-sheds was given at the meeting in May ; and two men were made a special committee for putting up the galleries, which must be finished by the last day of September. On the 18th of July, 1732, the work was so far advanced that the town passed the following vote, which reads as though it had been drawn up by a lawyer: “That if the workmen do fulfill, do and perform each of the conditions by the workmen particularized yet to be done to complete the work of the meeting-house, within the space of seven weeks next ensuing, the conditions fulfilled, the town votes their acceptance of the house.” The sum of thirty pounds was also voted to meet the expense of the galleries, and a committee appointed to receive a certain bequest towards the cost of the building.

Imagine yourself coming from the north along this way. When you are at the top of the hill yonder, the road before you descends into a deep hollow. Fairly on the summit of the rise beyond stands an unpainted building, parallel with the highway, having a door in the end and another towards the road, with three (or four) windows each side of it, a similar row at the height of the second story, and others in the end towards you. These windows, not large, have small diamond-shaped panes and open inward on hinges. You enter. The walls are somewhat roughly plastered, but there is no ceiling. Directly before you is an aisle leading straight to a pulpit, the floor of which is six, or very likely eight, feet, and the top nine or ten feet high ; above, a nicely paneled sounding-board, shaped something like a marquee tent, projects from the wall. There is an elevated pew directly in front of it, about two and a half or three feet above the floor, — “the deacon’s seat.” The house is filled with strong benches having backs, and there is a row of seats all around next the walls ; those at the ends railed off with balusters from two aisles running to the stairs, in the two front corners which lead to the galleries that go round three sides of the building. The galleries have paneled fronts, topped off with a rail and little balusters eight or ten inches high. All the interior as well as exterior of the house is unpainted.



The two bodies of seats, you notice, are unequal; that on your left extending eighteen inches (or one seat) farther towards the rear of the house, having in front of them a table near the wall, but no turned corner-benches. When service begins you find all the men seated on that side, all the women on the other; while most of the boys and younger men are ranged in the west gallery, with a tithing-man watching over them, and carrying a long, slender rod. On the left of the pulpit, as you face it, is the minister's pew, and on the right a pew built by Samuel Dummer, Esq. There is no record of others. The gallery is furnished with seats like those of the floor. The "quiristers," elected as often as needful in town-meeting, sit in the gallery directly opposite the minister, the bass singers fenced off from the women by the division between the two parts of the gallery, but the tenors sitting on the women's side, behind them. The sopranos sometimes "filled the whole front." Directly below the pulpit, on the first seat of the middle aisle, are the Selectmen, and on the opposite side their wives; next come the very aged men, and on the opposite second seat their wives; on the third are some of the more wealthy and respected of the townspeople, and their wives across the aisle to their right; and so the quality tapers down until against the front walls are the young men who have recently graduated from under the tithing-man's rod.

And now, having seen how the young parish went to work to provide itself with a house of worship, let us look into its way of

#### GETTING A MINISTER.

Preaching was maintained from the first, the two deacons of neighboring churches, who lived within the town, being the committee for providing it. The sum of four hundred pounds was appropriated that year for all expenses, including the meeting-house and the minister, twenty pounds a quarter being set apart for him.\*

At the March meeting in 1731, it was voted to continue the preaching for the present, and a certain Mr. Smith was engaged; but it was also voted "not to approve of any gentleman

\* At this date an ounce of silver was still worth 21s. in currency.

at present for settlement, or in order to settlement." Mr. Smith, then, understands that he has no chance. The next meeting was held, March 18, and then the same sum was voted for preaching as the year before; and the two deacons, Harnden and Thompson, were authorized to treat with a minister for three months. Here you will please note a falling short of the method which, after these hundred and fifty years, the churches of nearly all denominations seem everywhere to have adopted. The favorite method now is to prepare as full a catalogue of candidates as possible, who are to walk in procession Sunday after Sunday, through the pulpit; after which they are in a condition, out of utter weariness and confusion, to consent to any one who is strongly urged; unless, indeed, they choose to disagree upon all.

The two deacons seem, however, not to have given universal satisfaction; for another committee was chosen, May 25, for the next quarter, with the same instructions. On the 6th of July, this committee are directed "to treat with Mr. Chandler" for three months' preaching. At the same meeting we note, in passing, that Abraham Jaquith and Kendall Pierson are made a committee for securing "a decent *burying place* to bury the dead in the town" (July 6, 1731). Up to this time, then, burials had been made either at the centers of Woburn or Reading, or in small lots near the homes of the deceased.

Then, on the 29th of October, 1731, one year from their first meeting, the town passed a vote that it "will provide for the settlement of a minister, in due time, by a sum of money given to him;" also, that the town is "ready to treat with a gentleman or gentlemen, with a view to settlement;" also, "that the Rev. *Mr. Varney* be treated with by the committee," "to preach to us for a time, in order to settlement."

That is to say: All the world is advertised that "the Town of Wilmington is ready for a minister; it will make suitable provision for him; its committee is duly authorized to negotiate; they will please begin with Mr. Varney, who is desired to serve us for a sufficient period to enable the people to know him well as a preacher and as a man." From this time, then, we must think of the firesides, the fields, the highways, and all places of regular or chance meeting, as hearing much talk and



speculation on this matter. The subject takes its place with that of the meeting-house, the new roads to be opened, the crops, the weather, the state of the markets, and the value of the paper money, as a regular staple of conversation.

On the 7th of December, 1731, the old committee on preaching seems to have been restored, to act "till further order." Then follows a vote which I quote in full, as marking a difference between those times and our own in the gravity with which towns then treated religious matters. The record is as follows: "Voted, That the Reverend Mr. Browne of Reading, and the Reverend Mr. Phillips of Andover, be treated with and entreated, by the committee in the town's behalf, to carry on the solemn exercises of a Fast in this town, for the Divine favor to this people in the great, weighty, and important affair of the choice and settlement of a gospel minister, upon the 23d day of December, instant. And in case these Reverend Gentlemen can't come, then to apply in like manner to the Reverend Mr. Barnard of Andover and the Reverend Mr. Putnam of Reading." Let us remember the town, in formal meeting, passed this resolve. The day of prayer was to be held in behalf of the town's choice of a man who should give instruction in the Christian religion to old and young, lead in the services of public prayer and praise, visit the sick and the afflicted, and bury the dead. Do we not all agree that the tone of the resolve befits its object? Were our fathers the worse for treating such matters with becoming seriousness?

On the 6th of January, 1732, the committee are ordered to make further arrangements with Rev. Mr. Varney, if they can. This looks as though they had been well pleased. But they seem to have failed; for on March 6th they are instructed to provide "transient preaching" for one month. Their hopes had come to naught; and they knew not what to do. And now comes something more like the modern way. There is, first, a vote "to hear ministers in order to settlement;" then distinct votes, to hear Rev. *Mr. Warren*, Rev. *Mr. Robbins*, Rev. *Mr. Brown*; and if any one of these can not be had, then to hear the other two. But here comes in a difference again. Instead of causing these gentlemen to pass in review before them as rapidly as possible, each one is to be listened to

for one month. There were no railroads through pulpits then.

On the 4th day of July, 1732, a special town-meeting was summoned for the choice of a minister, in which, to our surprise, a wholly new name appears — the Rev. *Mr. Ward Cotton*, who was unanimously elected “by paper vote.”\* The sum of three hundred pounds was voted for settlement; and “six score pounds, salary, of paper money, yearly, and to decrease or increase as the paper money, or other currency, shall rise or fall in value.”

A committee was also appointed “to seek after land for a minister,” for his house, and also for his cow and horse. A most substantial committee, composed of the deacons John Harnden and James Thompson, with William Butters, Abraham Jaquith and Benjamin Harnden, was appointed to treat with Mr. Cotton.

The negotiations did not go smoothly. For we find the town voting, Oct. 3, 1732, That the committee wait further upon Mr. Cotton. Meanwhile, it is voted that “Mr. *David Stearns* be sought for to preach till Mr. Cotton has been further treated with,” and the meeting adjourns for three weeks. But the town does not meet until the 31st of the month, four weeks. Then, either the people are dissatisfied with their committee, or the committee are discouraged; at any rate a wholly new committee, Kendall Pierson, chairman, is elected, and are instructed to treat with *Mr. Hobbey*, *Mr. Stearns*, *Mr. Browne* and *Mr. Ebenezer Hancock*, for one month’s preaching apiece “transiently.” Again at the March meeting, (March 6th), 1733, this committee surrenders its life, and the town returns to its two deacons, with Lieut. Benjamin Harnden; and they are directed to treat with *Mr. Jabez Fox* and *Mr. Ebenezer Hancock*, each for four weeks. The meeting was adjourned to the last Tuesday of the month, when the town voted: that Mr. *Jonathan Pierpont* preach for the month of April and two Sabbaths in May. On May 18, there was another meeting. The town was evidently disappointed that

\*This, again looks a little modern. Mr. Cotton, we can fancy, is a man of whom they have heard such extraordinary things, that, without once setting eyes on him, they make haste to choose him, and do it unanimously.



they had been unsuccessful; votes, that a minister be heard, in time convenient for settlement. A committee is chosen to supply the pulpit until the third Tuesday of June — to which time the town adjourns.

The town met again according to adjournment, June 19, and voted, “that Mr. James Varney be treated with, to preach for one month,” and a committee of seven — the largest yet appointed — were chosen to confer with him. So the town had got back where it started, and is evidently hoping to carry out its original desire. The size of this committee indicates an expectation that something will come of this effort. And so it turns out; for on the 12th of July, or about three weeks after, we find a “meeting called for the choice of a minister and some other things,” and the first vote is “to proceed to the choice of a Gospel minister, which results in *Mr. Varney's election*.”

It will be remembered that in the act of incorporation, “the inhabitants” were “required” to provide themselves with a minister, “within the space of three years.” That term was within two months and a half of its end; whether this fact had anything to do with the present agreement, whether the delay had been occasioned by a want of unanimity in favor of Mr. Varney, which had now disappeared after the hearing of so many others, or whether, as is more probable, the hesitation was on Mr. Varney's side, and was occasioned by the uncertain state of his health, can not now be confidently asserted. Twelve men are on record as having supplied the pulpit, ten of them since the vote that the town was ready for a settlement; but most of these had, probably, been mere transient supplies. The people seem to have now called the man who was their first choice.

They vote him a settlement of three hundred pounds,\* to be paid half the first year, and half the second, after his ordination; one hundred and twenty pounds in currency, for his salary, to rise or fall, as its value falls or rises; and that the town will be at the cost of obtaining its share of two thousand acres of land, “laid out to Woburn,” for ministerial use, after it is obtained.

They likewise voted him twenty-five cords of wood yearly.

\*Silver being at eighteen shillings per ounce in currency.

Later, they appropriated thirty-two pounds\* for the expenses of the ordination. Mr. Varney was ordained, Oct. 24, 1733. The object of the incorporation of the town is accomplished. It is now a complete human society, families organized under the forms of both church and state, and is competent to fulfill all its functions.

#### THE MEETING-HOUSE REPAIRED.

I shall pass over about thirty years. They were years which witnessed the two French and Indian wars; the one commencing in 1744, and lasting about four years, the other in 1755, and lasting seven years. No small proportion of the burden of these wars on this continent fell upon Massachusetts, as was natural. For as early as 1721, her population was 94,000, while in 1729, eight years later, that of New York was but 65,000; and in 1732, three years later still, Pennsylvania had but 30,000; Maryland, 36,000, and New Jersey, 47,000. The worst result of the war here, however, was its disturbance of the currency. The government of the State felt itself compelled to issue paper money, which continually fell in value; giving opportunity to sharpers and speculators to ply their hateful business, to the grievous affliction of the great mass of the people; reducing many to poverty, and keeping the poor from rising. There are few disasters so deplorable and so exasperating, as the introduction of fiat money. And much of the currency of those times was little better.

The year 1762, as just remarked, saw the end of the second French war. And in 1764, the Wilmington people had become dissatisfied with their meeting-house. Its builders were grown old or had died, and the younger people wanted something up with the times. Besides, the population of the town had increased, and required more room.

As usual, it took some time to come to an agreement. The first vote appears May 21, 1764,—to “new shingle and clap-board the meeting-house,” to put in new windows, the glass

\*The cost of Rev. Mr. Jackson's ordination, in 1729, at Woburn, had been £83. 9s. 6d.; of which the principal item was, 433 dinners, @ 2s. 6d. each, £54. 2s. 6d. The keeping of 32 horses, 4 days, was but £3. But 6½ barrels of cider, cost £4. 11s.; and 25 gallons of wine £9. 10s.; while 178 suppers and breakfasts amounted to £8. 18s.



seven by nine, (instead of the diamond panes), also "new doors," and "as many pews as the house will admit of;" "the hind seats in the gallery were to be made banister seats."

But it seems that all were not pleased with this plan. For on the 4th of June, just a fortnight later, another meeting was held, at which all the votes of the preceding meeting were reconsidered, and then it was voted "to repair the meeting-house by adding twelve feet to its length," in the middle; "to make pews all around against the wall; to make another row of pews on the fore side of the alley; then finish it off, inside and out, and sell the pews to the highest bidder;" to pay for this by assessment on the town; it being understood that Joshua Thompson stands to his offer to pay \$50 towards the cost, over and above the sum that the pews shall bring. Captain Samuel Walker, Ensign Paul Cook, Thomas Pierree, Lieutenant Benjamin Harnden, and Ensign Thomas Rich were appointed a committee for carrying out this plan.

Ten days later this second plan was modified by a vote to make the addition of twelve feet at the west end instead of the middle. On November 26, again, it was voted "to plaster the meeting-house." So by degrees a plan was worked out.

If you had been coming along the road from the north-east some bright morning early in 1765, you would have seen, instead of the black, square, barn-like edifice of a year ago, a new-looking structure of decidedly oblong shape (58 feet by 36 feet), all resplendent in light yellow, with large-sized square panes, 7 by 9, in place of the old diamond panes; and entering, you find the interior changed still more. The walls have been newly plastered; new pews line the four sides, paneled and topped off with small balusters; and three pews on each hand front you as you stand in the middle doorway, leaving room for four rows of benches between them and the aisle running past the pulpit. Looking up, the fresh ceiling is disfigured with the old braces. Most of the gallery-front is brown with thirty-two years' exposure; but twelve feet of it are of the color of the pews. Two of the pews, however, near the pulpit, look old, like most of the gallery.

The townspeople's eyes were open; and at the March meeting of that year (1765) it was voted "That the braces in the

meeting-house be removed and put on top of the beams." What they were going to brace there, the record does not say. This vote evidently developed a difference of opinion. People must needs have something to exercise their faculties upon; and as nothing more important offered itself then, they discussed the question of these braces. "Shall they be cut out or not?" and if so, shall they be put above, to fasten the beams to the roof? On the 9th of September another meeting was held, and the opponents had been able to rally sufficient strength to bring the vote to a tie. An adjournment was taken to the 19th, at which time the progressives triumphed and the braces were doomed. It is probable, though by no means certain, that within a year they were removed.

May 19, 1766, we find still further tokens of new ideas in the vote "To paint the breast-works of the galleries, the pillars and the pulpit;" also, "To remove the 'cheers' out of the alleys." But then, in March, 1767, the "cheers" had not gone; the vote was repeated, and three men were appointed to see that the thing was done.

The cost of these repairs had amounted to £2132. 4s. 4d. old tenor, or somewhat over £284. new tenor.

Deacon Morrill (now near his eighty-fifth year) remembers this house well. Its interior had been painted, the records say, in 1766; and the color, when it came to be taken down in 1813, was a dull red, like old, rough mahogany. The pulpit, built by Mr. Evans, was a much nicer piece of work than the one in the meeting-house of 1814. It was handsomely grained in imitation of mahogany. "Its poplar framework, having been covered from the light, was found as white, when taken down, as when first put up." Above it was an elaborate sounding-board projecting from the wall, over the window, shaped with graceful curves and delicately colored, a very light red. It was paneled underneath. The pulpit desk was covered with some kind of crimson cloth, having a border of silk tassels. Upon it lay a rich velvet cushion, with large tassels at its corners. "Old Mr. Walker, minister at Danvers, was preaching one day, and nestled round so much that he knocked it off into the deacon's seat, much to the edification of the younger portion of the congregation, and it had to be taken up



to him. At the minister's right hand rose an iron bracket, shaped like a crane, holding an hour-glass." "At his left hand," when the deacon was young, "used to lean old Mrs. Jabez Brown, the Rev. Mr. Reynolds's mother-in-law, with her ear-trumpet, which she swayed back and forth, following the motions of the minister's body."

There was a broad stair below, on the level of the deacon's pew; and our venerable friend remembers hearing that his grandfather had a large dog who would make that stair his post for a dog's watchful kind of sleep during sermon-time; and when his dog-ship judged that the minister had preached long enough, he would rise, stretch himself, and gape; which was a signal, I suppose, for the tithing-men to shake their rods at the boys.

In the old times it was customary for a deacon to line off the hymns. There was old Deacon Benjamin Jaquith, who, by reason of failing eyesight or other infirmity, was a little uncertain in his reading; and tradition has not yet forgotten how "the dear old soul, his wife, used to quake inside of her bonnet and wince, when he stumbled over the lines. She owned 'it made her feel so bad.'"

Behind the pulpit the round-topped window had rows of side-lights. It was draped with heavy crimson curtains having tasseled borders, and was parted and hung over ornamental supports on each side. There were but three wall-pews on the minister's right, and the space of the fourth was taken up with the stairs and one or two seats placed sideways, in front of which seats was a passage leading to the closet underneath the pulpit.

This closet was an awesome place. In it were kept the christening-basin (gift of Cadwallader Ford) and another article, the thought of which, when the deacon was young, used to make his flesh creep. He "had to go into that closet, at times. It was a dark place, with a peculiar shut-up odor, and corners in which nobody knew what might be hiding itself." Going towards it one morning, he felt very timid about entering. Then he thought he heard something — "a pretty bad kind of a noise," he could not tell what. So he concluded he would get somebody to go with him; and found a young fellow



named Kittredge, who boldly declared that he would find out what made the noise. The two went together, Kittredge ahead. He found the basin, he found the "*grave-cloth*," and — nothing else. That noise remains a mystery. It probably sounded within those ghostly chambers which even boys often find near, but which their feet never tread.

We come next to

#### THE PERIOD OF THE REVOLUTION.

Let it ever be borne in mind that the Massachusetts Colony originated in the feeling of English Puritans that the liberty to practice the true religion was not secure in England. They feared a return of prelacy, and of Romanism, its elder sister. Hence the deep resolve that there should be another England across the water, where the true faith should be safe from assault. But that it might be safe, the political rights of the colony, secured by its charter, must be maintained. Let it ever be remembered, that this purpose, deliberately adopted by John Winthrop and those who acted with him, formed the very central principle and was the actual vital force of the whole movement. It was in the hearts of all the people. The original charter had been taken away Oct. 23, 1684, and the rights secured by it had been cut down; but every measure of the crown for repression, however successful, had only intensified the determination of the colony to maintain its essential freedom. It had fought every inch of ground, and this struggle had kept its purpose strong and fierce. During the French and Indian wars all questions of this nature were necessarily out of sight. But these wars were extremely burdensome. They laid upon the people a dreadful load of debt, and tormented them with a depreciated currency. So soon as the wars were over, this outcry arose: "We shall not get free of debt in many years." (Felt's Mass. Currency, p. 151.) "Can it be possible that the duties to be imposed and the taxes to be levied shall be assessed without the voice of one American in parliament?" Then comes the Stamp Act and the Revolution. But the fact to be noted is, that the very purpose in which this colony originated was itself an act of essential rebellion, covert, deliberate, and determined, against the powers supreme. It

was the purpose to have a *new* England, which should, first of all, and at any risk, be other than the old England in its very innermost spirit, and in its religious and political principles and forms, distinct. Sooner or later the newness of that new England must necessarily make itself both seen and felt. It had, indeed, been doing this all along, and now it was about to do it in a most decisive manner. The New was openly to defy the Old, and to make itself separate. And it was in no sense accidental that this separation began in Boston. John Winthrop, before he left England, investigated the question of the feasibility of an armed resistance to the British crown, if that should become necessary. The sword was in his mind when he started for these shores; and there never has come a time when the colony which he planted was not ready to shed its blood for the achievement of its hope,—the peace that only comes of liberty. Later, she engraved her solemn testimony to this readiness on her coat of arms:—“*Ense petit placidam sub libertate quietem.*” —With her sword she seeks the stable peace of freedom.

On Monday, the 19th of September, 1768, the records give us the first note of the approaching struggle,—six years and a half before the Battle of Lexington,—in the election of *Mr. Paul Cook*, a committee-man to serve at a convention to be held at Boston, Thursday, the 22d; and also in a vote, “That the town do highly approve of the votes and proceedings of the town of Boston, and do return them their thanks.” Thus it was that the Town of Wilmington launched its raft upon the rapids of the rebellion. It was deliberately and decisively done, and never has the town repented its act.

I propose now to draw from the records so much of a view of the part taken by the town in this struggle as these records give. And first of all we are struck with the frequency of the town-meetings during this period. From the 19th of September, 1768, till the news of peace reached Congress, March, 1783, these numbered 135; during the seven years of the war, 110; or nearly an average of 16 a year. If these meetings took three hours each, of fifty men, whose labor was worth ten cents an hour, the cost amounted to about \$240 a year, or for seven years, to \$1680, besides their travel. But let us note



some of the things done in these meetings, and some of the little events with which greater ones were mixed.

Among the latter, I observe that "deer-reaves," or, as elsewhere called, "persons to inspect the killing of deer," were still among the town-officers; that, in '69, Rev. Mr. Morrill wanted his salary paid semi-annually, and the town refused to do it; that, in '70, it was voted to remove the school into three districts, and in '71 into four districts, a committee being appointed to determine the particular places, which indicates that school-houses had not been built in all. Also, in '71, there was a vote to send a representative to the General Court. It appears to have been customary for each town to pay its own representative; and hitherto Wilmington had uniformly been too economical to do this. But now public affairs were coming close home to every man, and all will be agreed, we should suppose, that they must have a voice in the great questions of the hour. But no; economy does not yet consent. In May this vote was reconsidered and negatived by a large majority. The times were not quite ripe for a measure so costly.

In March, '72, there seem to be school-houses in the "Nod" district, in "Mr. Walker's and Jaquith's," and "over by Buck's and Eames'," but in the south the school is to be held "at or near the house of Samuel Butters, Jr."

The year '73 opens with a sound of public commotion, the town holding a special meeting on Thursday, the 28th of January, at which a "committee appointed to examine the public grievances" made a report, which occupies a little over one page of the records.

What were these grievances? This paper declares: (1.) That the town agree to the opinions of the town of Boston recently published; expresses "sincere gratitude" to the town of Boston for the care and vigilance which it had shown in behalf of "the public good and safety;" pledges the town to join with Boston, "yea, with the whole continent," in every lawful expedient for the security of those civil rights which we still enjoy, and the recovery of those that we think have been unjustly wrested out of our hands (referring, I suppose, to the forcible abrogation of their first charter, and other acts in the same line of policy); plainly recognizes a just reason "for these

afflictive dispensations, in moral delinquencies of the people," "calls to mind how very remarkably the Supreme Governor of the world has appeared for our land, in times past, to deliver us from impending ruin," but does not think that we have deserved from the parent country the treatment we have suffered; and declares: "We are truly loyal to the king; but at the same time, must say, we apprehend the measures Great Britain is pursuing, if continued in, will terminate both in the ruin of the mother country and the colonies; but hope the time is not far distant when "our king shall have a right knowledge of our state, and shall scatter the blessings of peace and prosperity all abroad."

Such were the hopes which the Wilmington people were trying to cherish a little more than two years before the fight at Lexington. The king was going to learn their real condition; would then do them justice, and better times would come.

That 28th of January was very tempestuous, so the report was referred to the March meeting, at which it was read three times, unanimously adopted, ordered on record, and a copy sent to Boston. It is clear to one thoughtfully reading these records, that the feeling of the people was as vehement then as in the opening days of the late rebellion. Their action shows the same unanimity and the same incisive energy. But only a few leaders, such men as Samuel Adams and his compeers, were definitely expecting war; though the feeling had been growing, that at last it might come. At the same meeting, for the first time, a "*committee of correspondence with the Boston committee*" was chosen, consisting of Mr. Benjamin Jaquith, Mr. Timothy Walker and Mr. Reuben Butters.

A year later, March 7, 1774, we find a straw, indicating an ominous change in the outlook, and that everybody had begun to think of a resort to arms as not impossible. The town instructs the Selectmen "to examine the town's stock of powder and ball, and to buy more if they think proper."

I think it a somewhat grim fact, that this powder and ball were then stored in the meeting-house attic; which thus was not only a house of prayer, but also kept the powder dry. The incident is emblematic. Our fathers believed in "the sword of



the Lord and of Gideon,"—that there are times when the truth must be defended with earthly weapons, and that wars are righteous and are holy, when necessary to the end that godliness may not cease. Puritanism believes in the sacredness of the secular power when in the way of righteousness—and only then.

This act of the town followed close upon Gov. Gage's enforcement of the *Boston Port Bill*, that put a sudden stopper upon the business of the place. In the same meeting, a vote was taken not to purchase or use any *foreign teas*, liable to pay any duties. It was on the 16th of the previous December that the Boston Tea Party had taken place, which the Port Bill was intended to punish. You see that the town is ready at any instant to march squarely up to the mark. There is not a sign of any division of sentiment or any hanging back. Any step which the leaders at Boston recommend is unhesitatingly adopted here. So, July 14, 1774, we find them promptly ordering the town treasurer to pay the full sum assessed on the town toward the cost of the Continental Congress, then in session. The next vote was, "to choose a committee to draw up a '*Solemn League and Covenant*' for the freeholders and other inhabitants to sign." Cadwallader Ford, Jr., Mr. John Hathorn, Mr. Timothy Walker, Lieut. Ebenezer Jones, and Joshua Eames, were this committee. A fortnight later, their report was read three times, unanimously accepted, a committee to get signatures chosen, and then the Covenant, with the names, was ordered to be kept by the clerk till we hear the result of the Continental Congress—which was to meet on the 5th of September of that year (1774).\*

On the 30th and 31st days of August a convention for the county of Middlesex was held at Concord, the Hon. James Prescott, chairman. The result of this convention came up before the people of Wilmington, in a meeting held in the meeting-house, on the 7th of September, when it was accepted, and ordered on record. This result fills six pages of the town records, and gives the names of all the members of the conven-

\*A note in the records declares that a certain member of the Committee to draw up the covenant (whose name has been carefully scratched out), though he had agreed to, at last refused to sign it. (Was it John Hathorn?)

tion, and its acts. Its formal declaration begins thus: "It is evident to every attentive mind, that this province is in a very dangerous and alarming condition. We are obliged to say, however painful it may be to us, that the question now is, whether, by a submission to some acts of the parliament of Great Britain, we are contented to be the most abject slaves, and entail that slavery on posterity after us, or by a manly, just and virtuous opposition, assert and support our freedom." The declaration ends with these words: "Our fathers left a fair inheritance to us, purchased by a waste of blood and treasure. This we are resolved to transmit equally fair to our children after us. No damage shall affright, no difficulties intimidate us. And if, in support of our rights, we are called to encounter even death, we are yet undaunted; sensible that he can never die too soon who lays down his life in support of the laws and liberties of his country."

The beauty of this talk lay in its truth. Again we are reminded of the oneness in spirit of that generation with the first and with the present. We are now, and have ever been, one people with our fathers. Our liberties are a sacred treasure.

Another little fact indicates, Sept. 26, 1774, a change of times, of such a character as to reach the pockets of the citizens. At last they are willing to be at the cost of a representative to the General Court; and Mr. Timothy Walker is chosen to go to Concord in that capacity. On the 20th of December, they again vote to raise the Province tax, of £19. 5s. 4d.,—(\$66), to be paid into a special town committee, and to "indemnify and defend the constables from all loss and charges that may arise from not paying the same to Harrison Gray, Esq.," his majesty's treasurer. So, you see, the strands are breaking that held the Province to the crown. One of the most important was this, by which the taxes were drawn into the king's treasury. That flow stopped, here in Wilmington, on that 20th of December, 1774, five months, less one day, before Lexington fight. Ephraim Buck, Jr., was one of the two constables, the Ephraim that in August, three years before, was in the woods chasing the bear; and who is now thirty-two years old. He paid over the taxes that he collected to Mr. Timothy Walker, town treasurer, (for the vote appointing a committee



was reconsidered) ; and he doubtless felt, as he did it, that it was a more interesting and important act than the hunting of any bear. And indeed it was. The king had got his last copper from the farmers of Wilmington, and the treasury of the Commonwealth, not yet fully organized, was receiving its first. It was an interesting moment. Every one felt it. All the taxpayers of the town knew that this time they were not paying to the king, but to themselves. Already the government had begun again to be, as in the beginning, "by the people and for the people."

Mr. Timothy Walker, on January 17th, 1775, is chosen delegate to the Provincial Congress, "at Cambridge *or elsewhere*." They were not sure, we see, of meeting there, but only of meeting somewhere.\* Also, at the same time, it was agreed "To take some proper method to relieve the suffering poor of Boston." That city, you remember, was cut off from all its trade by sea ; the Boston Port Bill had gone into force June 1, 1774, and Gen. Gage was on hand, to see to its execution, as early as the 13th of May.

And Boston deserved this at the hands of all her sister towns, by the greatness of both her sufferings and her services. She then numbered about seventeen thousand inhabitants, "almost wholly of English extraction, educated, industrious and energetic ; the wealthier citizens noted for their hospitality and politeness ; and it was the heart of a wide-reaching enterprise, the principal commercial emporium in the colonies." † With a forecast and courage which is most impressive to the student of her history, she had led this movement, and now found herself garrisoned by British troops, her population reduced to an enforced idleness, and deprived of the means of sustenance. Throughout the land, people praised her and thanked her ; and proved their sincerity by large contributions toward her pressing needs. Wilmington was not backward.

The next entry, of interest, which occurs in the records, bears date March 6, 1775. We are coming near to the Lexington fight. On this day, the town voted "to comply with the

\* The name "Congress" seems to have been chosen because it was not organized as a General Court in the manner provided in the charter.

† Frothingham's "*Siege of Boston*," p. 19.

resolve of the Provincial Congress respecting the raising of minute men ;” and “that every man from sixteen to sixty, that doth not appear at this house next Wednesday, at 9 of the clock in the forenoon, with arms and ammunition according to law, shall pay a fine of six shillings,” (one dollar), “provided he or they cannot give a reasonable excuse.” Three days later, the town voted, “To enlist 24 good, able-bodied minute men,” and ordered that they should train two half-days in the week, for three weeks ; and after that, one half-day, each private receiving one shilling, the captain three shillings, the lieutenant two shillings, for each half-day.” On March 20th,—just thirty days before Lexington,—another meeting was held, and Cadwallader Ford, Jr., was ordered to “purchase good, effective firearms for such minute men as are not able to buy them, to be returned to the town’s stock at the end of service.”

We are reminded here of a difference between those days and these. Then the woods were full of wild game, every house had its gun, and every grown boy was accustomed to firearms. Moreover, it was but twelve years since the end of the last French war ; and as there are men now living in our towns who served against the late rebellion, so there were old soldiers then, enough, probably, to officer the companies.

Our town records contain no reference to the Lexington fight. Some of the minute men must have been in it ; but I have, as yet, received no knowledge of their number or names. I find mention of the older towns,—Reading and Billerica ; and Woburn sent a body, one hundred and eighty strong, under Major Loammi Baldwin. Very possibly Wilmington, so recently a part of Woburn, may have sent her minute men with those of the mother town.

So, War has come ! And this time, not a war with savages, or with savages re-enforced and led by Frenchmen ; but war against their lawful king, and with their own flesh and blood. We can recall the feeling which the attack on Sumpter first awoke, the sense that, solemn, awful war was indeed upon us ! that there were going to be battles, possibly even defeats ; events bloody and terrible, and which would go upon the page of history. Let us be sure, it was so then. Fathers looked



thoughtfully on their sons. Mothers dreaded the hour which they foresaw. War, in truth, had come to the door of every house. There was nothing to do but to fight it out; and Wilmington went up squarely to the mark, whenever any demand was laid upon her.

In January, 1776, a vote is passed, to send the "quota of wood to the army that were besieging the British, in Boston." In July, 1776, a meeting is called to enlist seventeen men, to join the forces going to Canada. On September 30th, a wholly new kind of interest comes up. There is talk of framing a State Constitution; some are for it, and some against. This town consents that the present House of Representatives and Council may do it; but declares that it must be referred to the towns, for ratification. They are not fighting to be free from King George, in order to become passive subjects of any King Samuel or King John, or of any General Court.

By February 12th, 1777, still another matter crowds itself on their notice. They were beginning to feel the war, as we felt it, in 1863. Prices had risen. All values were in confusion, causing great embarrassment. So, the selectmen and the Committee of Safety meet, and determine the prices of farmers' and mechanics' labor, of wood, charcoal, horse-shoeing, of tavern fare, and mugs of flip and toddy. A comparison of these brings out some curious results. Farm labor, for example, between November and February, is 1s. 6d. a day, or twenty-five cents; horse-shoeing, with steel tips and corks, costs 3s., or fifty cents. A man must work two days, then, to get a horse shod. Dinner at a tavern is 1s. Three dinners, then, are equal to two days' work. Plainly, farm hands, in Wilmington, cannot board at taverns. Flip, made of New England rum, costs 8d. a mug. Two mugs, then, come within two pence of drinking up a day's wages. Farm hands cannot afford to drink toddy. Oak wood brings 10s. a cord, or \$1.66 $\frac{2}{3}$ , which is equal to about six and one-half days of farm labor, and plainly says to laboring men, — Cut your own wood.

There is another vote, March 3d, 1777, which has a strange sound in these days, — accepting all negro slaves, whom their owners choose to free, and agreeing to support them as the town's poor, if unable to maintain themselves.

A little later, March 17, 1777, came renewed indications of the burdens of war, \$2,000 (dollars, now, not pounds), raised, in addition to the bounty given by Congress and the State; and again, £18. (pounds this time; the new reckoning has not yet quite displaced the old) to the men who enlisted in January. Votes appropriating sums to recruits going on particular campaigns, are now continually occurring. For example, August 19th, \$50, to such as join the army against Burgoyne. Again, May 12, 1778, £133. 6s. 8d., to nine months' men, and £100. to eight months' men, going to Fishkill, with mileage at 6d. a mile. July 14th, 1778, they vote to pay such of the men going to Rhode Island, as do not need the cash down, in town notes, bearing interest. In July, men going to Rhode Island, *for six weeks*, are to receive £24. per month,—seemingly a large sum; but when you remember that in this year it took \$328 in currency to buy \$100 in silver, it does not seem extravagant. In the next year, the depreciation was worse, and \$742 must be paid; in 1780, \$2,934; and in 1781, \$7,500. In 1780, the Rev. Mr. Morrill's wood was rated at £30 a cord, for one month, and those who fail to bring their share within the month, shall pay £60 a cord. The taxes amounted to £12,372. In these times, the value of the paper money had to be fixed, by authority, every month. No debts ought to have run more than thirty days.

In March, 1779, an addition of £200 had to be made to Mr. Morrill's salary, on account of the high prices. In April, a committee was appointed "to inspect the market, and use their utmost endeavors to prevent monopoly and forestalling." People, it would seem, had not then come to believe in these as a legitimate business. The truth is, the evils of a depreciating currency were intolerable; and, on July 14th, of this year, another desperate effort was made to check them by force. A convention met at Concord, which adopted spirited resolutions, and proceeded to make up a list of prices, at the head of which I find, West India toddy, 12s. a mug; a dinner, 15s.; a day's labor, from 36s. to 48s. according to the season. It may be asked, what could these votes effect? and what could the Wilmington Committee of inspection accomplish? The intention of these measures, the action of the mother town will



show. This same summer, the town of Woburn voted,\* “That if any persons should violate the resolutions of the Concord convention,” “he should, upon conviction before the Committee of inspection, be accounted as an enemy of his country, have his name published in the newspapers of Boston, and be cut off from all intercourse and dealings with the other inhabitants of the town, for such a time as the committee should fix.” A few months seem to have taught people, however, that the difficulty was not to be remedied in this way. The votes really amounted to nothing.

The General Court of 1777 had framed a new constitution, which had been submitted to the towns. On June 12th, of the following year, Wilmington appointed a committee, with Rev. Mr. Morrill as chairman, to examine it and report; and on the 29th, this committee (after some change in its membership) submitted four objections, and a recommendation, as follows:—

1. There ought to be a bill of rights.
2. A governor and lieutenant-governor are a needless expense; the President of the Council is enough.
3. While so many are absent in the army, it is no time to make a new constitution.
4. The one now in force will answer for the present, and the new one is not needed.
5. They recommend that, when the war is over, a body of men be chosen, for the sole purpose of drawing up a constitution.

This report was unanimously adopted, “there being present 73 voters.” It is interesting to note the working of the democratic system of those days, and to see that every man had his voice with regard to the most important matters; and also, with what discretion the people acted, putting forward their best men, and faithfully following leaders who were worthy of trust.

In April of this year (1778), the small-pox invaded the town, and the question came up in town-meeting, “Shall we inoculate?” Two objections to this were usually made in those days: First, it seemed a dreadful thing, to poison a healthy person with this disease. He might die; and would it not, then, be the same as murder? And again, the whole endeavor seemed to many, a flying in the face of the Divine ordinance,

\* History, p. 382.

which appoints to every man his hour of death. The town refused to inoculate; and voted to prosecute any person instrumental in spreading the disease, either by inoculation or otherwise. They instructed the selectmen to enforce proper regulations, and examine any person seen going to the house of John Jaquith, or other infected places. Afterward, a pest-house was provided.

In 1779, another effort was made for a State Constitution, and, at the same time, there was again a movement for alleviating the evils of a depreciated currency. On the 23d of August, the town chose two delegates to the Constitutional Convention at Cambridge, and two, also, to that which was to meet at Concord, to deliberate on money and prices. The next seven town-meetings are taken up with measures for raising recruits and their bounties, expenses created by the small-pox, the making up of the minister's salary and wood, with voting \$1,000 additional to the salary, in view of the depreciation of the currency, and, in the next meeting, re-considering the vote, and agreeing to do it "by subscription, if possible;" and on the 17th of May, 1780, the Form of Constitution, reported by the Cambridge Convention, is submitted to the people, and referred to a committee consisting of the Rev. Isaac Morrill, Cadwallader Ford, Esq., Major Ebenezer Jones, Ens. Nathan Pearson, Mr. Reuben Butters, Captain John Harnden, Captain Joshua Harnden. On May 24, the Constitution, with the amendments proposed by this committee, were unanimously accepted, "there being fifty-two voters present and voting." May 29, however, distinct action was taken upon one of the amendments, as follows: "To see if the town would have the 111th Article in the Declaration of Rights amended, as follows: 'That there be free liberty of conscience allowed to Calvinists and Arminians; and that they have full and free liberty to pay their money towards the support of the Gospel to such public teacher, or teachers, on whom they attend; and that the majority of any town, parish or precinct, in this State, shall not have it in their power to settle a public teacher over the consciences of the minority, and contrary to their sentiments.'" Twenty-seven voted for this, and twenty-one against it. But at an adjourned meeting, on the 5th of June, this action was reversed, by a vote of forty-six to forty-three.



This little record of numbers tells quite a story. At the first meeting, evidently, it had not been generally known that this point was coming up, and there seems to have been but forty-eight voters present who had made up their minds. But during the week that followed, it is clear that some talking was done, in those first summer days, on something besides the prospects of the hay-crop and the deeds of Sumpter's and Marion's men in South Carolina. The town was almost equally divided; one part saying that no majority had a right to force their Calvinism down the throats of people who did not like it, and the other part remonstrating, that ministers had got to be chosen somehow; and how, but by a fair vote and a majority? There is no doubt that both parties scoured the town for voters; and the next Monday showed eighty-nine instead of forty-eight prompt to show their hands at the town-meeting. At the South they were thinking then of quite other things. On the 12th of May Charleston had been surrendered to the British, and very likely the news did not reach the farmers of Wilmington much before June; possibly it came during the very time of these discussions.

By September 4th the new State constitution was going into operation, and the people met for the choice of officers. Here the Hon. John Hancock, Esq., received sixty-seven votes for Governor; the Hon. Azen Orne, Esq., forty-two for Lieutenant-Governor; and for the same office, the Hon. James Bowdoin, Esq., fifteen, — both together ten less than those for the Governor; and the five Senators, fifty-one each. It is noteworthy that in this first election of State officers the total vote fell short by twenty-two votes of that on the Arminian question, and that sixteen men were willing to say that they wanted John Hancock for Governor, who did not care who were chosen Senators.

On the 22d of June the people seem to have grown tired of appropriating currency, the ultimate value of which could not be known, and put some *corn* into their appropriation for the twelve men going to the war, — “fifty bushels, with £750, paper money, to each man;” also to supply their families with corn at \$50 a bushel. Again, on July 4th, they vote 18 bushels of corn a month, with mileage at the same rate, reckoning 20

miles one day's travel. They also give them \$1000 each, and a blanket, "to be returned when they come home." But the number and condition of the blankets returned at the end of the three months are nowhere mentioned. In October, £7000 are voted for supplying 4560 lbs. of beef to the army; and in December, \$35,020 for 8755 lbs.

On Feb. 26th, 1781, the town gets back to one of the most ancient species of currency ever used, voting to give to the ten three-years men *twenty calves* each; if discharged after one year's service, the calves are to be one year old; if after two years' service, then two years old; if after three, then three years old. It amounted to this: each man has set aside for him, before he joins the army, twenty calves; and whether he returns in one or three years, there they are, with interest, to meet him on his coming. In March of the following year the work of raising recruits was brought still closer to individuals by a division of the whole number of adult males into ten classes, each class to furnish a man from its own members or otherwise.

With all the alterations in the value of money, the town treasurer must have had a hard time of it. The people thought so, and on March 12th voted "to give Timothy Walker, Esq., 18 bushels of corn, next Christmas, for his extraordinary services as treasurer for the last three years." Few, I think, would now be willing to undertake the same work for six bushels a year.

But while Wilmington was thus faithful in its duty to the country at large, it was equally true to duties nearer home. Three days later we find a vote recorded directing the assessors to lay the tax for Rev. Mr. Morrill's salary *in silver money*; and other acts of similar tenor appear frequently throughout the reign of paper. But, at this same meeting, when somebody proposed that "each *squadron* of the town" (as though in these war-times the very town had become a troop) "should draw money for schooling in proportion to the taxes it pays," this was speedily voted down, probably under the impression that it was the children, and not the dollars, that were to get the benefit of the schools.

In July, 1781, we again find them furnishing beef for the army



to the amount of the minister's salary ; and — what comes harder still — seven men must be found to go to West Point. In August it was agreed that each of these men enlisting for three months should be paid \$60 bounty. The matter is to be managed by the “classes” into which the town is divided, and each soldier is to get \$20 before he starts. That you may get some idea of the trouble that this business made, I note, in passing, that in June, 1781, four town-meetings were held, in July five, and in August five — fourteen, you may say, during hay-time.

But meanwhile all the thoughts of people were not centering on the war and its taxes, or on the perplexities of the currency. This was the time when the religious change, which some thirty years later eventuated in Unitarianism, was seething in minds quite unconscious of the surprise that was in preparation for all parties. Very few, indeed, anticipated the actual result. A bubble of this fermentation broke in town-meeting, Oct. 14th, 1782. An article had been brought forward in the meeting of September 30th, and Timothy Walker, Esq., Major Joshua Harnden, Mr. Benjamin Thompson, and Mr. Nathan Pearson were appointed a committee to confer with Rev. Mr. Morrill about it. It reads thus : “To see if the town will grant liberty to sundry persons requesting the same” (probably the persons just named) “to open the meeting-house to such gospel ministers, of a regular standing, as they shall see fit, upon the week-time, when not used for other services.” In brief, the question was : May some of us have *Arminian* preaching instead of Mr. Morrill's Calvinism ? and the town said, No. It was a period of changes. Political ideas had undergone a revolution, and the foundations of religion and of morals also were going to be questioned ; as we have been seeing ever since. Nor is this something to complain of or to regret. Subjects must needs be earnestly discussed in order to be understood, and this understanding is essential to both permanence and progress.

This meeting was in October. One more was held on Christmas day. Peace was signed on the 20th of January, 1783, and the news of it reached Congress in March. The weary struggle of arms was over ; but the war had made deep marks which re-

mained long visible, and bequeathed burdens that were felt for many years.

Here ends my record. It would be interesting to go over the signs of returning prosperity after the war, to tell how little Tommy Bond was so eager to be a soldier, that, after being rejected, owing to his youth and smallness, he tried again, and, by standing on tip-toe, managed to slip through into the army ; but how, when he got into camp, they laughed at him, and put him into the bakery. So it happened that he graduated, at the end of the war, a skilful baker ; came to Wilmington, and published countless editions of those two-leaved tracts, so popular even to-day, under the title of “ *Bond’s Crackers.*” We should be glad to know about Wilmington farming, and its hop-raising, and the Middlesex Canal, long a source of prosperity to the town. We should be glad, also, to review the building of the second meeting-house in 1813, and the desperate contest about its site, which was ended so shrewdly by Esquire Blanchard. It would be pleasant, likewise, to look over the list of the ministers who have served here, and to trace the prosperity of the church, and to follow out the histories of sons of Wilmington who have won distinction ; but to treat of all of these topics of interest would require a book, instead of a chapter, and must be left to other hands.

We have surveyed the first fifty-three years of the town’s history ; and what have we to say, now at the close ? This : that through all these years the town of Wilmington has come up to the mark. If there was anything for her to do, she did it. I believe, that, on the whole, this may be noted as a trait of the town, down to the present day. It seems to me that a general character of *stability and trustworthiness*, has ever characterized this people, and belongs to them now. They make no pretense, they give occasion for little talk, but it may be said of them, with certainly as much justice as of others, they mind their business and they do their duty.

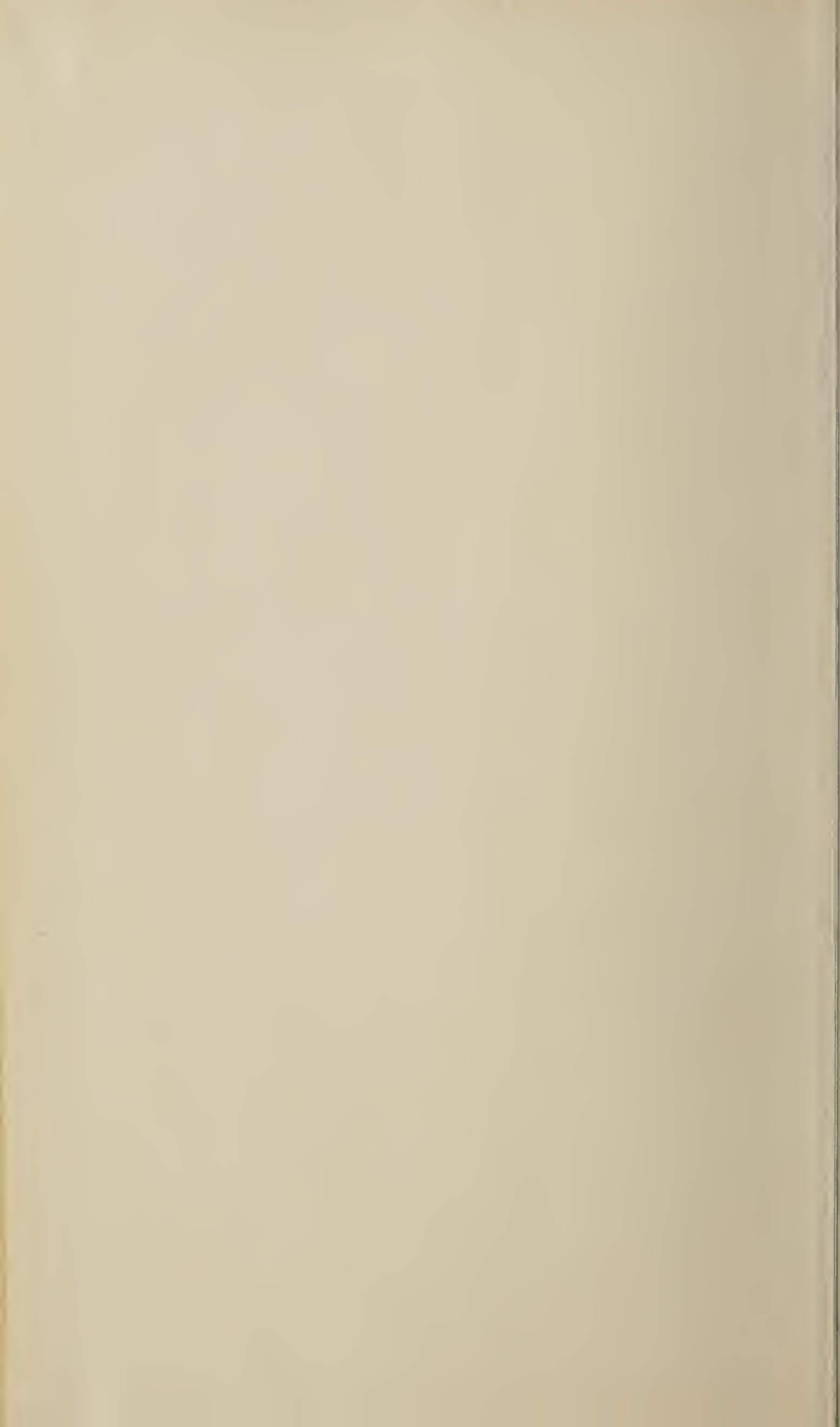
Of course all communities have differences in opinion, which sometimes grow into antagonisms of feeling. But the history

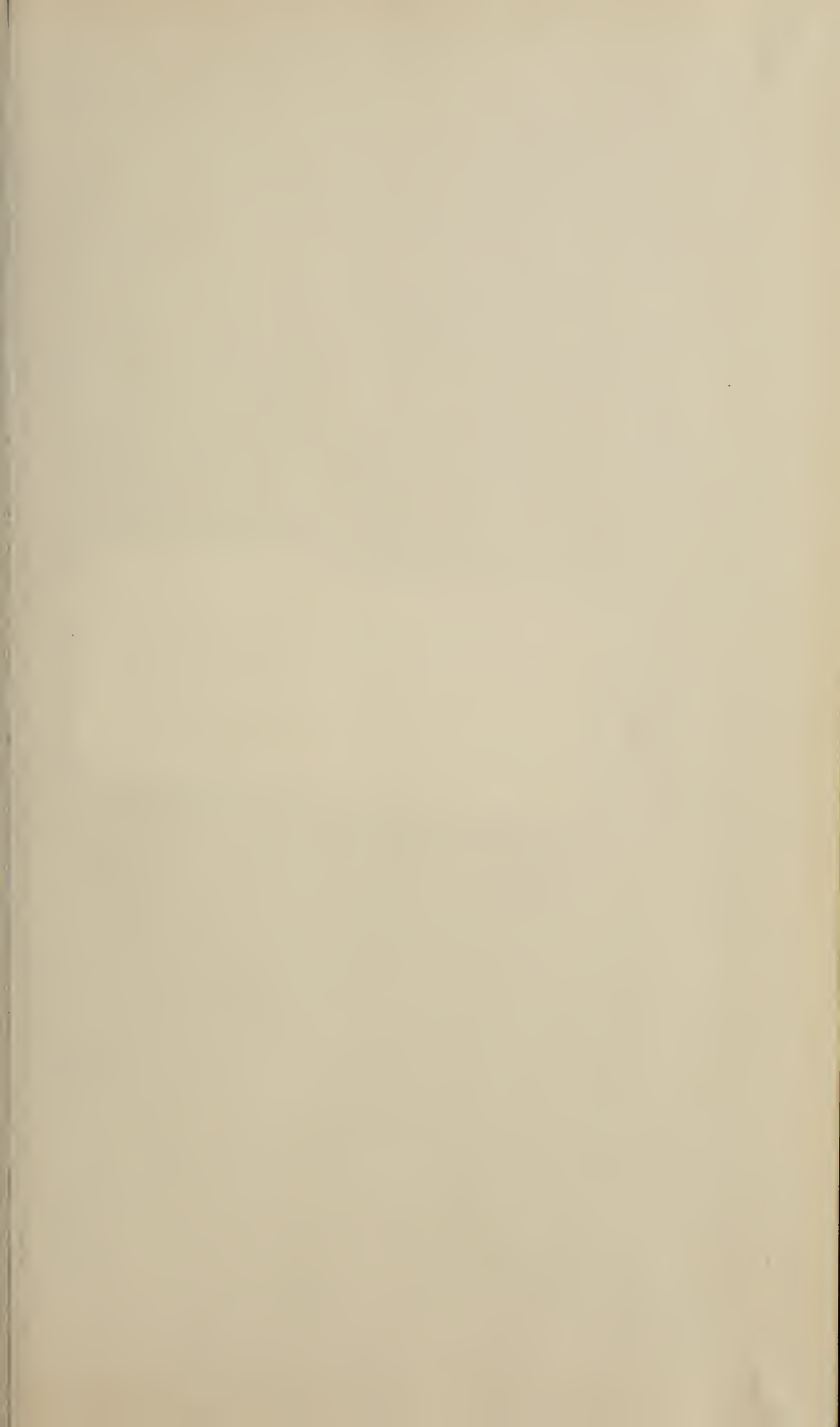










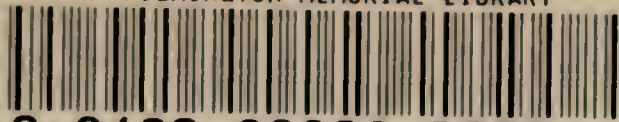




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